THE SHINNERS' REVISED DEWEY DECIMAL[1]

BARRY M. COHEN

3527 Granada, Dallas, TX 75205, U.S.A.

The primary purpose of the Southern Methodist University Herbarium is the taxonomy of plants, especially those of the southwestern United States. Dr. Lloyd H. Shinners, an early and long-time director of the herbarium not only was engaged in his professional duties of plant classification, but also took a keen interest in bibliographic classification. This concern led to the development of a unique bibliographic classification system for use in the SMU Herbarium Library, now known as "The Shinners' Revised Dewey Decimal for Geographic Botany" (Floras, etc.). This particular classification scheme was formulated by Dr. Shinners in response to special needs arising from both the herbarium's physical location within the SMU Science-Engineering Library and its working agreement with the cataloging department of the SMU Central University Library.

In 1961 the herbarium moved from its old headquarters in the attic of the Fondren Science Building to the basement of the Science-Engineering Library. It was apparently decided, by simple mutual understanding, that the herbarium's library would be cataloged in the main and science-engineering catalogs, but no separate card catalog would be maintained for the herbarium itself. Dr. Shinners hence needed and wanted some method of classification for his own library, and one that would work in conjunction with that of the science-engineering catalog. From these conditions grew the Shinners' Revised Dewey.

The Shinners' system as presently constructed is, by this writer's observation, apparently based on Dewey's tenth edition, for no Dewey edition before or since has had the Shinners' feature of relating a specific number to a given plant taxon. In 1963 Shinners mentions in an internal memorandum that he is in the process of converting from Harvard's Gray Herbarium classification to the Dewey, but does not specify the edition (2). For his system Dr. Shinners made use of the botanical class numbers 580 – 589. With these he incorporated the numerical system developed by Dr. C.G. De Dalla Torre and H. Harms in their book *Genera Siphonogamarum* for the Spermatophyta or seed plants.

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The *Genera Siphonogamarum*, published in Leipzig in 1907, is a monumental work written except for the bibliographic references, entirely in Latin. Professors Dalla Torre and Harms designated 280 families of Spermatophyta by numerical assignment, sometimes with a letter added to the number where there are closely related families or where there is some controversy concerning the designation itself. Beside each plant family name is a set of numbers which refer to the numbers assigned to the genera within each family. Within the text each family or genus is followed by its original bibliographic citation. In the literature of taxonomy the first reference with a definitive description is the most important concerning that individual taxon, for it is usually the one on which the botanical name is based. Other literature is, of course, important, but the most relevant is the initial article or description.

The incorporation of this system by Dr. Shinners is ingenious, for it provides not only a numerical designation for a large group of plants, but also a ready-made if now somewhat dated bibliography. (See item #3)

The Shinners' Revised Dewey utilizes the Dewey geographic tables to classify floras of various regions, states, and countries. Since becoming director in the early 1970's, Dr. William Mahler has updated the classification system to include the Pteridophyta, Bryophyta, and Lichenes. The SMU Herbarium possesses an unusually fine collection of ferns, mosses, and lichens and consequently desired to bring the library collection concerning these plants within the overall classification scheme.

How does the Shinners' Revised Dewey work? Let us report some examples as demonstrated by Barney Lipscomb, the curator of the herbarium. For the title *The grasses of Bahia* (in Brazil), the first decision must be whether to employ a specific plant designation or choose a geographic one. If approached from its "flora" aspect, 581.981 for Spermatophytes in Brazil could be used. However, this is much too broad a classification and the better choice would be 584 for Spermatophyta monographs plus .019 for grasses or the Gramineae (Poaceae); hence in this case the book would carry the call number 584.019. Another example demonstrated was *Forest Trees of Australia*. The choice made here was to classify immediately by flora since the geographic feature of this work is so prominent. The designation would then be 581.994 for a geographic study of the Spermatophyta in Australia. Once Lipscomb assigns the Shinners' Revised Dewey number, the library materials are processed by the central cataloging department, given their Cutter numbers, and a card prepared for them with "Herbarium" written above the full call-number. The cards are then filed both in the main catalog at Fondren and in the catalog of the Science-Engineering Library.

By custom Lipscomb has become the library's bibliographer for botanical works. In addition to the works installed in the herbarium, there are more general ones which must be placed in the main collection, either reference or circulating. These books are given Library of Congress numbers. The herbarium collection contains the only newly assigned Dewey numbers in the SMU science-engineering area. However, there are some older botanical works with Dewey numbers that have not been converted to the Shinners' System.

The results of this system are what Dr. Shinners intended for himself and the herbarium library staff. Any work can easily be located given either a title or geographic area plus the author's name, without climbing the stairs and consulting the card catalog. Lipscomb's ability to locate titles is truly remarkable. However, it does require more than casual practice with the Shinners' Revised Dewey. However, sometimes the research and thought needed in the most difficult of searches, e.g. by name of author only, is more time consuming than the tedious walk up the stairs, but rather easily conventional search of the card catalog.

The Shinners' Revised Dewey was developed to meet the particular needs of the SMU Herbarium. From time to time, other herbaria express interest in the system, but none has adopted it as yet.

The Shinners' Revised Dewey also has some logical connection with what the Library of Congress Classification does when it gives a geographic specification by "Cuttering according to Region or Country" (1). However, the exact application by the Library of Congress varies throughout the classification scheme and the individual libraries have great leeway in assigning the proper Cuttering for their collections. In any event, the SMU Herbarium finds its unique classification system worthwhile in its own circumstances, and it seems to serve its purpose well.

REFERENCES

1. Cataloging Service Bulletin, #2 (Summer, 1983), pp. 78–79.
2. Internal memorandum by Dr. Lloyd H. Shinners, July 22, 1963, in file I with the early annual reports of the SMU Herbarium.
3. Radford, A.E., W.C. Dickison, J.R. Massey, and C.R. Bell. 1973. Vascular plant systematics. Harper & Row, New York. p.30.